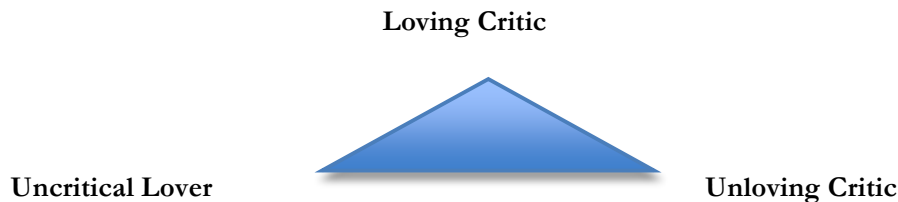


## Loving Critics

*Pity the leader caught between unloving critics and uncritical lovers.*  
John W. Gardner

John W. Gardner<sup>i</sup> spoke about how the society needed people who would be loving-critics of the institutions in which they worked. You can apply that to your parish church.

In a commencement address, “Uncritical Lovers – Unloving Critics,” at Cornell University on June 1, 1968 he spoke about the choices we have in how we engage our institutions.



In his address he offered a fictional account of how scholars in the 23rd century would look upon our age.

"... They pointed out that twentieth century institutions were caught in savage crossfire between uncritical lovers and unloving critics. On the one side, those who loved their institutions tended to smother them in an embrace of death, loving their rigidities more than their promise, shielding them from life-giving criticism. On the other side, there arose a breed of critics without love, skilled in demolition but untutored in the arts by which human institutions are nurtured and strengthened and made to flourish. Between the two, the institutions perished.

The twenty third century scholars understood that where human institutions were concerned, love without criticism brings stagnation, and criticism without love brings destruction. And they emphasized that the swifter the pace of change, the more lovingly men had to care for and criticize their institutions to keep them intact through the turbulent passages.

In short, men must be discriminating appraisers of their society, knowing coolly and precisely what it is about the society that thwarts or limits them and therefore needs modification. And so must they be discriminating protectors of their institutions, preserving those features that nourish and strengthen them and make them more free. To fit themselves for such tasks, they must be sufficiently serious to study their institutions, sufficiently dedicated to become expert in the art of modifying them.”

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<sup>i</sup> John W. Gardner, 1912-2002, U.S. secretary of health, education, and welfare (1965-68), Head of the National Urban Coalition. Founded and served as chair of Common Cause, (1970 - 1977), Professor of public service at Stanford University (1989 to 1996) When younger he taught psychology at Connecticut and Mt. Holyoke colleges and serving as an intelligence officer with the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II, he joined the Carnegie Corp. of New York in 1946, becoming its vice president in 1949 and its president in 1955.